

Church of the Savior Goes on a "Reverse Mission Trip"

Committing to helping just one refugee family sounded like radical hospitality to us. Our small church is located in the midst of some of Atlanta's richer neighborhoods. When we look around us, it is tempting to think that we are poor. To co-sponsor a family, we had to step beyond our own perception of ourselves as a small, financially-constrained church to recognize that we live in one of the wealthiest nations of the world. To help the world's homeless, one family at a time, would remind us of our call to feed the hungry, to cloth the naked, and to welcome the stranger.

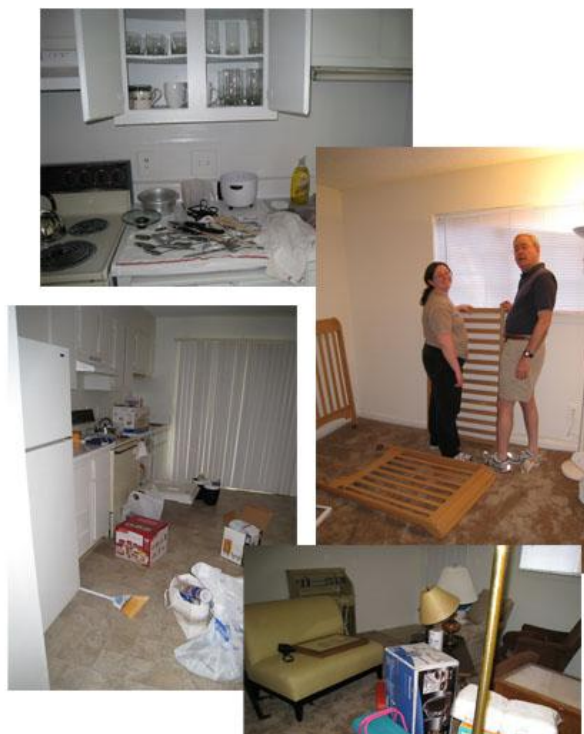
Working with RRISA, Refugee Resettlement and Immigration Services of Atlanta, we committed to a "reverse mission trip," co-sponsoring a refugee family—to set up their apartment, to welcome them at the airport, and to provide them with their first meal here. This small act of hospitality was a big step of faith for our church community.

While initially we felt overwhelmed by the idea of being co-sponsors, we decided to venture into this unknown territory. We started by collecting the small household items; members signed up to bring different items on the list. Then we were ready to take the next step, finding gently used or new furniture. Despite our worries, people stepped forward with donations. One member of the church was downsizing her household and donated dressers, a desk, and a kitchen table and chairs. One family donated a used crib. Another family stocked the pantry and refrigerator. Others donated lamps. Even our children pitched in by helping us collect children's picture books from our class rooms. Soon we were ready to set up the apartment.



Loading up

Church of the Savior, a UCC community of Faith in Atlanta, GA



Some assembly required

Our hopes for this family seemed so tangible when we looked at all the books for this young child, books that would help the whole family learn English. After hanging a few pillow shams on the wall, we put out some books, toys, and a few stuffed animals for the young child in the family. As we left the apartment, we knew this place was ready to become a home. Amazed at how everything came together, we were eager to welcome our family.

When RRISA told us the apartment was available, we rented a van and delivered the furniture and household goods to the apartment. After unloading everything, we faced the three most dreaded words—some assembly required. The crib lay on the floor, and we discovered that it was missing a few pieces. We began to wonder if we, too, had a few loose screws. Was all this doable before the family arrived? Slowly but surely, we set up the apartment and discovered that we had everything that we needed and more.



Ready for our family to arrive